

Jesus in Hebrews Hebrews 1:1-4

Intro: Nothing in life is more important than knowing Jesus

John 6:68 - *You have the words of eternal life*

Philippians 3:8 - *I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.*

Context of Hebrews – **John Philips Introduction**

“The glory of God comprehends both the holy properties of His nature and the counsels of His will; and the light of the knowledge of these things we have only in the face or person of Jesus Christ”

- John Owen

Colossians 2:9 - *For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily...*

First: Jesus is God’s Final and Fullest Revelation. 1:1-2a

1:1-2a - *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, 2 but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,*

1 - **Long ago** – Genesis 1:28 - *God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.”*

2 - **At many times** – *Abraham in Ur, Jacob at Peniel, Moses on Sinai, Elijah on mountain*

3 - **And in many ways** – *A voice in the Garden, an angel to Abraham, a dream to Jacob, a burning bush to Moses, thunder and lightning on Sinai to Israel, etc.*

Psalm 29:3-9 - *The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the Lord, over many waters. 4 The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty. 5 The voice of the Lord breaks the cedars; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon. 6 He makes Lebanon to skip like a calf, and Sirion like a young wild ox. 7 The voice of the Lord flashes forth flames of fire. 8 The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh. 9 The voice of the Lord makes the deer give birth and strips the forests bare, and in his temple all cry, “Glory!”*

(Side note: It is fitting that Jesus selects both Moses and Elijah to appear with Him during the Transfiguration. These Old Testament prophets have important things to teach us about how we encounter the voice of God, Who is Jesus.

Moses first met God in a flaming bush and then on Sinai. Elijah encountered him in a cave as one natural disaster after another rocked the mountain and then God whispered.

We may need to train our ears to listen to thunder. But there is good news. After the thunder has passed, God may speak to us quietly as He did to Elijah. He did so in the incarnation.

*THEY all were looking for a king
To slay their foes and lift them high;
Thou cam'st, a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.
George MacDonald*

He came from the bosom of the Father to the bosom of a woman. He put on humanity that we might put on divinity. He became Son of Man that we might become sons of God. He was born contrary to the laws of nature, lived in poverty, was reared in obscurity, and only once crossed the boundary of the land in which He was born, and that in His childhood. He had no wealth or influence and had neither training nor education in the world schools, yet he is the source and end of all knowledge and wisdom.

His relatives were inconspicuous and uninfluential. In infancy, He startled a king. In boyhood, He puzzled learned doctors. In manhood, He ruled the course of nature. He walked upon the billows and hushed the seas asleep. He healed the multitudes without medicine and made no charge for His services. He never wrote a book, yet all the libraries of the world could not hold all of the books about Him. He never wrote a song, yet He has furnished the theme for more songs than all songwriters together. He never founded a college, yet all the schools together cannot boast of as many students as He has.

He never practiced medicine, and yet He healed more broken hearts than the doctors have healed broken bodies. This Jesus Christ is the star of astronomy, the rock of geology, the lion and the lamb of zoology, the harmonizer of all discords, and the healer of all diseases. And throughout history great men have come and gone, yet He lives on. Herod could not kill Him. Satan could not seduce Him. Death could not destroy Him, and the grave could not hold Him. He is our Christ, the preeminent one, and He is the theme of the epistle to the Hebrews, dominating its landscape from beginning to end.

1:1 – His name is above any prophet

1:1 – His name is above any angel

3:1 – His name is better than Moses

4:8 – His name is better than Joshua

5:13 – His name is better than Abraham

7:1 – His name is better than Melchizedek

7:11 – His name is better than Aaron

9 – His name is better than the Tabernacle

10 – His name is better than any sacrifice

11 – His name is better than any OT saint

12:1-2 - *Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, ² **looking to Jesus**, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.*

But the OT saints didn't know him.

Acts 8:34 - *About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?*

1 Peter 1:10 - *Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, ¹¹ inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories.*

The Jews knew God through Moses who spoke to God face-to-face

Jesus is God's face –

John 1:1 - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with [pros = face to face] God, and the Word was God.*

Exodus 34:29-33 - *When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, with the two tablets of the testimony in his hand as he came down from the mountain, Moses did not know that the skin of his face shone because he had been talking with God. ³⁰ Aaron and all the people of Israel saw Moses, and behold, the skin of his face shone, and they were afraid to come near him. ³¹ But Moses called to them, and Aaron and all the leaders of the congregation returned to him, and Moses talked with them. ³² Afterward all the people of Israel came near, and he commanded them all that the Lord had spoken with him in Mount Sinai. ³³ And when Moses had finished speaking with them, he put a veil over his face.*

But Jesus has made God personal for all of us -

John 1:14 - *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father*

Hebrews 1:3 - *He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

2 Corinthians 3:7-18 - *Now if the ministry of death, [the law] carved in letters on stone, came with such glory that the Israelites could not gaze at Moses' face because of its glory, which was being brought to an end, ⁸ will not the ministry of the Spirit have even more glory? ⁹ For if there was glory in the ministry of condemnation, the ministry of righteousness must far exceed it in glory. ¹⁰ Indeed, in this case, what once had glory has come to have no glory at all, because of the glory that surpasses it. ¹¹ For if what was being brought to an end came with glory, much more will what is permanent have glory. ¹² Since we have such a hope, we are very bold, ¹³ not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face so that the Israelites might not gaze at the outcome of what was being brought to an end. ¹⁴ But their minds were hardened. For to this day, when they read the old covenant, that same veil remains unlifted, because only through Christ is it taken away. ¹⁵ Yes, to this day whenever Moses is read a veil lies over their hearts. ¹⁶ But when one turns to the Lord, the veil is removed. ¹⁷ Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, [in the Bible] are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.*

What 'freedom' (v 17) do we have? Unlike Israel who could not approach Sinai or understand God's voice in the thunder, we "*beholding the glory of the Lord*" in the Bible, "*are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory [humanity] to another [eternity].*"

How does this happen? Jesus illustrated how it happens –

Mark 8:22-30 - *And they came to Bethsaida. And some people brought to him a blind man and begged him to touch him. ²³ And he took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village, and when he had spit on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Do you see anything?" ²⁴ And he looked up and said, "I see people, but they look like trees, walking." ²⁵ Then Jesus laid his hands on his eyes again; and he opened his eyes, his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly. ²⁶ And he sent him to his home, saying, "Do not even enter the village." ²⁷ And Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi. And on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" ²⁸ And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets." ²⁹ And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." ³⁰ And he strictly charged them to tell no one about him.*

- a) Peter confessed that Jesus is the Messiah
- b) Peter denied Jesus at Caiaphas's house
- c) Jesus restored Peter by the seashore

The disciples grew in faith in the same way Jesus healed this man.....progressively. But what is the key?

He was, and they were, looking at Jesus's face. We see Jesus's face in the Bible. You are going to see Jesus, like we've seen him in Hb 1:1-4, in so many different ways. But, by looking into his

face in the book of Hebrews and for the rest of this year, you will see him, love him and become like him.

Conclusion: (I've placed a 'conclusion' here because I think this may be as far as I get in the sermon).

ILL – The Covid-19 pandemic has made the winter colder, darker and longer. But crocuses are breaking the ground everywhere with the promise of Spring.

The miracles that have already happened are, of course, as Scripture so often says, the first fruits of that cosmic summer which is presently coming on. Christ has risen, and so we shall rise. St Peter for a few seconds walked on the water; and the day will come when there will be a re-made universe, infinitely obedient to the will of glorified and obedient men, when we can do all things, when we shall be those gods that we are described as being in Scripture. To be sure, it feels wintry enough still: but often in the very early spring it feels like that. Two thousand years are only a day or two by this scale. A man really ought to say, 'The Resurrection happened two thousand years ago' in the same spirit in which he says, 'I saw a crocus yesterday.' Because we know what is coming behind the crocus. The spring comes slowly down this way; but the great thing is that the corner has been turned.

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C.S. Lewis in *The Grand Miracle*

*Oh long and dark the stairs I trod,
with stumbling feet to find my God,
Gaining a foothold bit by bit
Then slipping back and losing it.*

*There came a certain time when I
Loosened my hold and fell thereby,
Down to the lowest step my fall
As if I had not climbed at all.*

*And as I lay despairing there,
there came a footfall on the stairs
And 'lo' when hope had ceased to be
My God came down the stairs to me.*

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Theodosia Pickering Garrison

I preached through the book of Hebrews in 2019. Then, I said about this text:

First: Jesus Expounds the Mind of God v1

Second: Jesus Executes the Will of God v2

Third: Jesus Expresses the Heart of God v3

Four: Jesus Exhibits the Glory of God v4

Hebrews 1:1-4 - *Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, ² but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world. ³ He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power. After making purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴ having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.*

God has come to us, friends, in Jesus. And that changes everything.

Second: Jesus is God's Only Begotten Son in Every Way. 2-4

Although the book is 13 chapters, and the author takes his time to develop some themes (the priesthood of Christ takes chs 7-10), he writes these three verses (2-4), like he is out of time and out of breath.

1. He is the voice of God -2a
2. He is the heir of all things -2b
3. He is the creator of everything -2c
4. He is the radiance of God's glory -3a
5. He is the exact imprint [tupos] of his nature -3b
6. He upholds the universe by the word of his power -3c
7. He is the ultimate sacrifice -3d
8. He is at the right hand of God -3e
9. He is the name that is above all other names -4 (Acts 4:12)

Third: But We See Jesus....5-14

1. You are My Son – 5a
2. I am your Father – 5b
3. You are worshipped by angels – 6
4. Your throne is forever – 8
5. You are anointed – 9
6. You were before everything – 10-11
7. You are forever the same – 11-12
8. You are enthroned in victory – 13

FYI:

Did Moses really see God, face-to-face? In Exodus 33:20, God tells Moses, *"You cannot see my face, for no one can see me and live."* However, earlier, in Exodus 33:11, we read, *"Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend."* So, did Moses see God, and

if so, how did he live? Also, how does this agree with John 1:18, which says, “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son”?

In Exodus 33:18, Moses asks God, “Please show me your glory.” God responds, “I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence. I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion. But,’ he said, ‘you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live.’ Then the Lord said, ‘There is a place near me where you may stand on a rock. When my glory passes by, I will put you in a cleft in the rock and cover you with my hand until I have passed by. Then I will remove my hand and you will see my back; but my face must not be seen.’” (Exodus 33:19–23). So, clearly, Moses never truly or fully saw God.

What, then, does Exodus 33:11 mean by saying God and Moses spoke “face to face”? Since God is spirit (John 4:24), He does not truly have a “face.” Exodus 33:11 is simply saying that God and Moses had a close relationship. They were in harmony with each other, just as close friends are. God and Moses were not literally face to face, but their relationship and communication was very much like two people who spoke to one another as close friends would.

While God can appear in human form (or in other physical form) if He wants to, He is, in His essence, not a physical being. Many people in the Bible witnessed theophanies, or appearances of God. No one, though, other than Jesus Christ (John 1:18), has seen God in all of His glory. Even the seraphim in heaven cover their eyes as they worship God (Isaiah 6:1–4).

Community Groups:

- 1 – Read Hebrews 1:1-4 with the group.
- 2 – Why is it important to know Jesus?
- 3 - When you think about God’s voice in the OT, what instances do you remember?
- 4 – What is the most novel or unique way in which God spoke in the OT?
- 5 – How does the author describe Jesus in verses 1-2?
- 6 – What does it mean that Jesus is God’s fullest and final word?
- 7 – How did Moses encounter God? (as a friend, face-to-face but not directly to his face)
- 8 – Why did he have to put a veil over his face when he descended from Sinai?
- 9 – How do we ‘see’ and commune with God today?

- 10 – Why do we not have to veil our faces when we read the Bible?
- 11 – What does Paul say about how we are transformed in 2 Corinthians 3?
- 12 – How does the healing of the blind man in Mark 8 illustrate this?
- 13 – How is your daily Bible reading coming along?
- 14 – When do you read? Where? Etc.
- 15 – What have you enjoyed most so far?
- 16 – If you are not reading through the NT, start with Hebrews.
- 17 – How can your CG help you read through the Bible for the rest of the year?